



Plant Materials Program

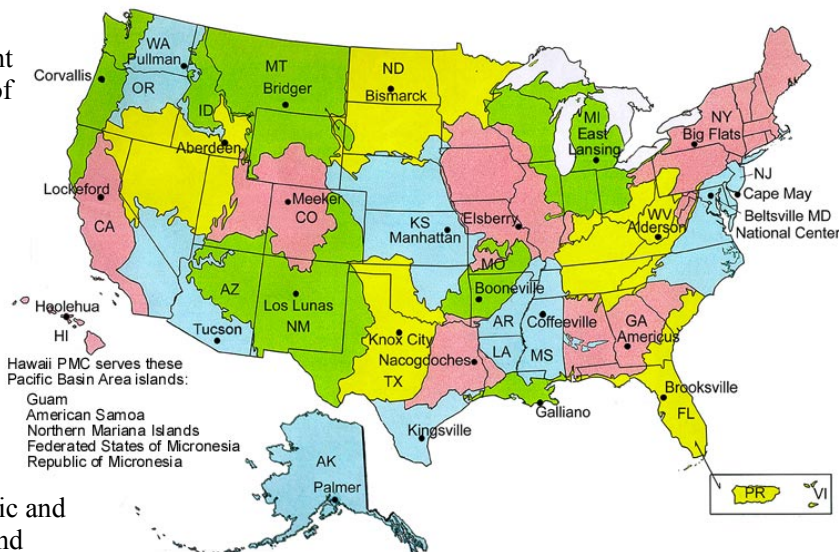
Program Overview

The Plant Materials Program develops plants and plant science technologies for the successful conservation of our nation's natural resources. The program consists of a network of Plant Materials Centers (PMCs) and Plant Materials Specialists located throughout the United States. Together, PMCs and specialists provide essential and effective vegetative solutions for critical habitats, environmental concerns, management practices, and key farm and ranch programs. There are 26 PMCs with service areas defined by ecological boundaries.

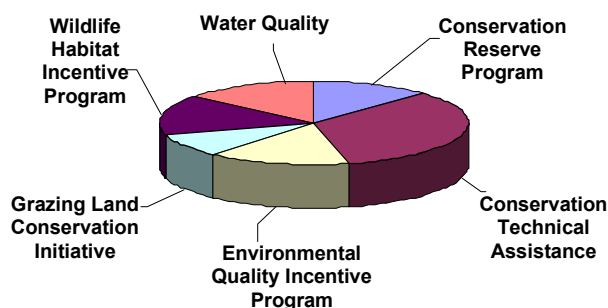
Program Activities

The Plant Materials Program provides vital plant resources and one-on-one technical assistance to public and private landowners needing assistance with critical land management problems like drought, wildfire restoration, and invasive species.

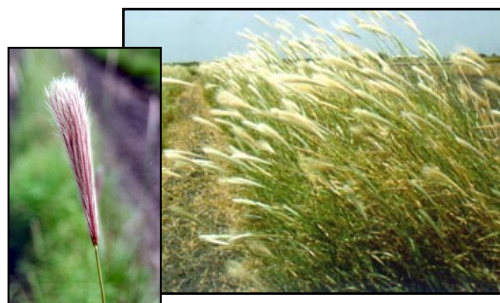
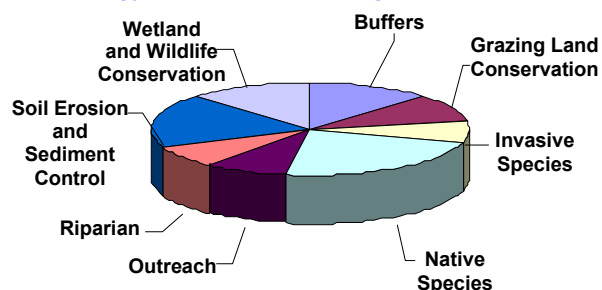
This need for Plant Materials Program assistance has continued to grow over the past decade. For example, in 2000, over 122,000 fires burned 8.4 million acres, in 2001, over 84,000 fires burned 3.6 million acres, and already through August 2002, over 63,000 fires have burned 6.4 million acres. In addition, invasive species take over private and public lands at an annual rate of 8 to 20 percent—an area twice the size of Delaware every year. Invasive species reduce agricultural production and eliminate desirable plants, costing the U.S. economy an estimated \$137 billion annually.



Plant Materials Studies Addressing NRCS Programs



Technology Transfer Addressing Resource Concerns



Kinney
Germplasm
false
Rhodes
grass is a
Plant
Materials
selection
used for
range
restoration.

The Plant Materials Program is uniquely positioned to assist with these resource challenges through selected plant species and the latest plant science technologies. With over 550 active studies on real-world conservation issues, the program's work offers immediate practical application. Its cooperation with a host of public and private partners on issues like wildfire and drought provide readily available information resources for addressing future conservation challenges.

In addition, the Plant Materials Program's work is vital to the success of the 2002 Farm Bill conservation provisions. Available plant materials and plant science technology are integral to the success of conservation programs such as CRP, EQIP, WRP and WHIP.

Program Achievements

Technology from PMCs and specialists forms an integral part of the NRCS Strategic Plan and its performance plan goals. The goals of providing a productive natural resource base and a high quality environment can not be realized without sound plant science technology. Plant technology is essential in meeting objectives dealing with soil conservation, sustained productivity, healthy habitats, and water quality. Plant materials technology is vital to:

- ❖ Coastal erosion stabilization from the Great Lakes to our oceans (including tidal salt marsh restoration).
- ❖ Culturally important plants for tribes.
- ❖ Grazing lands needs from east to west including public lands.
- ❖ Carbon sequestration and global climate change.
- ❖ Agricultural waste filtering and buffer strips.
- ❖ Native alternatives to non-native species.
- ❖ Restoration of wetland and wildlife habitat.
- ❖ Fire restoration.

The program has released more than 500 improved conservation plants, with over 400 being used commercially in the U.S. and beyond our borders. This means:

- ❖ Economic benefits. Commercial production of these releases exceeded \$93 million in 2001.
- ❖ Environmental benefits. Enough seed was produced in 2001 to plant 3.7 million acres, enough plants produced to plant 21,167 acres and enough trees and shrubs produced to plant a row that stretched over 2,180 miles. Commercial production of our plant releases in 2001 would cover an area three times the size of Delaware.
- ❖ Clean water. Plant Materials Program releases are planted on a wide variety of sites, resulting in a tremendous amount of soil saved each year. Saved soil means more productive cropland, cleaner streams, and improved wildlife habitat. The value of these is priceless.

Program Needs

A strong, viable Plant Materials Program is vital to our nation's natural resources. Based on a recent study, continued success of the Plant Materials Program is threatened by rising business costs that impact staff and operations. Additional funds are necessary now to maintain the effectiveness of the program in addressing plant needs that are critical to solving conservation problems.



For more information visit <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov> and <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

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